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NEW YORK NAT
IN
Gold Nugget Camp;
OR, THE
Wild All-Around Sport.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISSING MILLIONAIRE.

"NEW YORK NAT, I have a case for you
that will be your death or your fortune, dare
you undertake it?"

THE THREE ENTERING THE COUPE, DROVE RAPIDLY AWAY,
NEW YORK NAT CLOSELY OBSERVING THEM.

"Mr. Canfield, I will take chances any time with death to win a case."

"Well said! I knew you would do it, so I did not go to the Secret Service chief for men, but waited to see you."

"I am delighted to have you take the work, though it will carry you out of New York—far away from the city."

"All right, sir; I will go anywhere that duty calls."

"It will take you to the Wild West."

"Just where I would like to go, for when in California I had some little experience in wild life."

"It will try your nerve, endurance and temper to the utmost, as you will have to go to the mining country of Arizona, among the ranches and in fact follow trails of greatest danger in the work I will have you undertake."

"All right, sir, I live to learn; but what is it I am to do?"

"You read of the mysterious disappearance of old Millionaire Marcey?"

There was no immediate reply, and the one who asked the question gazed fixedly at the one he addressed, a handsome-faced youth who looked younger than the eighteen years he had lived, and whose slight, athletic form indicated strength and endurance far beyond the average.

The other was a man of twenty-seven, with a face of indomitable will and nerve, clear-cut features, expressive blue eyes and the look of one who would do and dare much.

He was stylishly dressed, and was seated in the library of an elegant New York home, where he was keeping bachelor's hall for the few months he was visiting the metropolis.

About him was the evidence of luxury and refinement, and upon the table by which he sat was a bundle of letters, an open map and a note book.

When New York Nat, the Boy Secret Service Chief of the Gamin Ferrets, did not answer his last question, though his face showed that he had heard it distinctly, Sherman Canfield* said again:

"You have, of course, read about the mysterious disappearance of the millionaire, Malcolm Marcey?"

"I have, Mr. Canfield, and I know more about his disappearance than the police seem to have found out," was New York Nat's rejoinder, and the quiet smile hovering about his determined mouth told Sherman Canfield that the youth had a story to tell.

"What do you know, Nat, or do you care to tell me?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I will tell, for you have been too true a friend of mine and my ferrets to refuse you anything; but has the disappearance of Mr. Marcey anything to do with the work you wish to send me upon to the Wild West?"

"Strange to say, it has, as you will see when you know all; but now what do you know about this most mysterious disappearance of the millionaire?"

"I will tell you, sir, just what I know, and though the police accept the theory that he has committed suicide by leaping off the Long Branch boat at night, or was seized with one of the dizzy attacks he is subject to, according to the reports in the papers, I know that if he is dead he was murdered, and if he is alive he is held a prisoner against his will."

"Ah! Nat, you interest me greatly, for I am sure you have facts to base your belief upon."

"My facts are, sir, that the other afternoon, when disguised as a bootblack I was following two men whom I have reason to

believe are crooks. They went into Mr. Marcey's house, and five minutes after a coupe drove up and halted before the door.

"Then I saw the men come out, supporting Mr. Marcey, who seemed weak and tottering, and the three entering the coupe, it drove rapidly away."

"And you followed the coupe, Nat?"

"I intended to do so but did not."

"That was not like you, Nat, when you were shadowing two men you believed were crooks."

Nat smiled blandly, and after a moment said:

"Do you see this plaster on the back of my head, Mr. Canfield?"

"Yes, it looks like a bad cut."

"Well, sir, one of those men who led Mr. Marcey from his home gave it to me, for the coupe stopped around the corner, he got out, and as I was running along to keep it in sight, I came upon the man, who dealt me a severe blow with a brass knuckle and I was knocked senseless."

"Yes, Mr. Canfield, we must solve the mysterious disappearance of the millionaire. I have been working hard to do so, for I intend to run those two crooks down if it takes me to Tophet."

"Well, to do so, Nat, your trail leads you not to Tophet but to the Wild West," was the emphatic response of Sherman Canfield.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISSING LINK.

CLEVER ferret that he was, New York Nat could not just see how he would have to go to the Wild West to solve the mysterious kidnapping of Millionaire Marcey.

But, the young shadower read by Mr. Canfield's face that he knew more than he had thus far told, so he said:

"All right, sir. I am willing, as I said, to go anywhere. Only give me the clue and set me right in the start."

"You have given me the clue, Nat, for the missing link in the disappearance of Mr. Marcey you have furnished in proving that he did not commit suicide, or meet an accidental death, but rather was murdered."

"Do you think that he was murdered, sir?"

"Yes, I feel sure of it now that I have heard what you have to say."

"The police, detectives and reporters have been trying to run down this mystery for weeks, but with no result."

"His servants thought they heard him come in with his pass-key and go into the library, and think they heard voices there, so supposed he had brought company with him; but they did not hear him go out; and though his mansion fronts on a park no one else seems to have seen what you did."

"But, go out he did, and not a word has been heard of him since, save that one man asserts that he saw him on the Long Branch boat, and that he appeared to have been drinking."

"Now you show that two men you were shadowing as suspected crooks drove up to his house in a coupe, entered, and—"

"Yes, and now I remember they entered with their own key!"

"Well, they came out unseen by the servants, Mr. Marcey accompanying them, and they were apparently supporting him."

"Entering the coupe they drove away rapidly, and you attempting to follow were met by one of the men with a blow that stunned you."

"This shows that you had been seen and suspected; and when discovered following them, you were promptly checked—which shows that Mr. Marcey really was kidnapped."

"Yes, sir, that much is evident. Was it done for the sake of a ransom?"

"For the sake of a fortune, Nat."

"Ah! you really think that is the reason then?"

"Yes, I have letters here that place me in possession of facts which I will now make known to you, for there are mysteries for you to solve, as you will see, lives to save, guilty ones to bring to justice."

"I will read you a letter I have just received from an old mining pard in Colorado."

"It is written in the Golden Nugget Mining Camps, one of the worst communities, as I happen to know, in the country, and where life is held dirt cheap."

"My old pard is a good fellow, always hoping to strike it rich, but always failing in his hopes, yet still working on."

"He is square, honest, fearless and ever ready to aid a friend or do a good deed."

"But his letter will explain, so listen to it attentively."

Taking one of the letters from the table Sherman Canfield read as follows:

"GOLDEN NUGGET CAMP, COLORADO,
April 1st, 18—

"DEAR PARD SHERMAN:—

"So you are in dear old New York, are you, keeping house in grand style for an old chum who has gone away leaving you as master?"

"Well, you are in clover, and I wish I could drop in on you, and also meet that young Ferret Captain you wrote me saved your life. He must be a dandy hustler."

"Well, I am here at the same old game of hoping to find a fortune; but now I hasten to reply to your letter to put you on the trail of a little deviltry that is being concocted here against one in New York, so that you can thwart their little game."

"It is just this:

"There is a wild fellow here, one who gambles to win and shoots to kill, and is an all-round sport, who it seems is pretending to be hard at work and thus deceives his old father, a millionaire of New York, who threatened several years ago to disinherit him unless he mended his ways."

"The old man put up money for him to buy a ranch here, and believes the young fellow is working hard; but he squandered the money, never bought the ranch and has developed into a terror; yet he writes home glowing letters of what he is doing and all that."

"Now it so happened that this youth became suddenly made aware of the fact that his father had an elder son, by a former marriage which had been kept a secret, and which fact would rule him out of his fortune should the old man learn that his first born still lived and was a fine fellow, while the second son was all that was bad."

"So, as the will was made in favor of the sport, before the other son could appear, or the father change the will, this heartless scoundrel has plotted against two lives."

"Ah! I see the missing link I furnished, Mr. Canfield, in showing that the millionaire was kidnapped," said Nat eagerly.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAD SPORT'S PLOT.

"YES, Nat, you have guessed aright, for Mr. Malcolm Marcey is the millionaire my pard's letter refers to, and this border sport's plot was quickly carried out here in New York."

"But, let me read on," and Sherman Canfield continued reading the letter.

"Now, Pard Sherman, it is a secret I cannot divulge, of how I got hold of all this, and I am so tied up by a pledge that I cannot act in the matter myself; but the case is plain that two lives are in danger, the millionaire and his eldest son, and I put you in possession of the facts, that you may act in New York and checkmate the sport, Maybrick Marcey, but known here as 'Mad

* Sherman Canfield of Omaha, Neb. A young man who won fame as a border boy, and later as guide on the plains. Mr. Canfield visited Europe as the private secretary of Buffalo Bill, and is now a rancher in Nebraska.—THE AUTHOR.

'aybrick' and the 'Mad Spor,' and the 'Man Killer,' and all of the names fit him. "There is a woman in the case too, one in whom I am interested, and whom I believe cared for me until she met Mad Maybrick. It seems to have cast a spell over her, though I believe it is fascination, not love she feels for him.

"Her name is Florence Dudley. She came here with her father a couple of years ago, and report says that the girl herself struck it rich by finding a mine; but she is well educated for her years, a refined little lady and a beauty.

"I love her and wish to save her from this terror, Maybrick Marcey, even though I never win her myself, and you can help me.

"The intention of the Mad Sport and his ally, for he has a mysterious pard in league with him, is to send men East who will do away with his father and also this unknown elder brother, of whose existence Maybrick Marcey has only lately learned.

"With the old man dead, and his will standing in favor of Maybrick, and the elder brother out of the way, the Mad Sport gets the enormous fortune for all his own, and will then still add to it by marrying Miner Dudley's daughter. That will mean her unhappiness and her father's death, for that terrible man will allow no life to stand between him and his plot for gold;—of that I am sure.

"I send herewith copies of papers that were shown him, proving the existence of an elder brother, and that he was alive, and just who his mother was.

"I made these copies to send to you, and I place the whole facts, plot and all before you, and beg you to act promptly to save the millionaire and his eldest son.

"As I am not sure that I read your address in New York aright, I send this to your home in Omaha, with a request to forward it without delay to you.

"By placing all before Mr. Malcolm Marcey you will show him, what he does not know—that his eldest son still lives—that his youngest son is not only deceiving him, but is the wickedest man in the mines, and is living a lie, while he is plotting the death of his father and brother to get, thereby, the big fortune which he will commit any crime to obtain.

"Look over the papers carefully, Canfield, and then act with your usual cleverness and promptness in the matter, for, remember, that your doing so will also save pretty Florence Dudley's happiness from being wrecked by this unconscionable villain, the Mad Sport.

"I ask this of you by our old friendship, and the pledge you once made me to answer any call I made upon you.

"After you have warned Millionaire Marcey, come, or send a detective here, and I will place you in possession of facts that will send Maybrick Marcey to the gallows, or make him a fugitive from justice.

"Hoping soon to hear from you, believe me, as ever,

"Your attached pard,

"HUGH HOLCOMB,
"NUGGET NAT."

Sherman Canfield passed the letter over to New York Nat, as he finished it with the remark:

"There, Nat, the case is before you, and here are the papers for you to look over."

CHAPTER IV.

TOO LATE.

"AND the warning came too late," said New York Nat, as he glanced over the letter handed to him by Sherman Canfield.

"Yes, for it was delayed a couple of weeks or more in Omaha, as my family were away from home and it was not forwarded to me here promptly.

"It has, as you say, come too late to save Mr. Marcey, for he has disappeared—doubtless has been murdered, but his eldest son may yet have escaped, so we must act.

"It is not too late to punish the villain who rejoices in the name of the Man Killing Sport."

"No, sir; not too late for that. He must suffer. I am ready to begin work at once—can start to-night if need be."

"Good! and that alone is assurance of success.

"Unfortunately I am just now so tied up in business matters here in the city, which I must settle for Colonel Cody, that I cannot get away; but you shall have all the funds necessary, and can take with you any members of your band of Unknown Ferrets that you deem fit."

"I shall take two, sir, Freckles and Keno, for the former has been a clerk in a law office, can telegraph, writes a good hand and as news-agent has picked up a great deal of information, while Keno is now a clerk in the chief of police office and is as clever a comrade as I want." So Nat answered.

"Both are the very ones to help you. I will get special badges and papers for you all from the Secret Service chief, so that you will be thoroughly protected."

"Thank you, sir. That will help us much, in an emergency."

"And I will give you a letter directly to my pard Hugh Holcomb, so that he will put you on the right track, though it will be best for you not to appear to know him, I guess."

"Yes, sir, that will be best. My idea is that we go to the camps as three runaway boy miners seeking our fortune by gold-digging."

"I'll trust you, Nat, to carry out your plans to perfection, and you will find Holcomb a splendid fellow, for I have seen him tried time and again, and twice has he saved my life."

"He is my namesake, sir, I see, as he signs himself Nugget Nat."

"Yes, in the mines they are sure to misname, or rechristen a fellow, and Hugh was called Nugget Nat from the fact that he found a nugget of gold worth a fortune, and in it was a silver vein that most distinctly formed the letters N. A. T."

"That was strange, sir."

"Yes, it was a remarkable freak; it was a perfectly outlined Nat."

"I shall take it as a good omen in this case, sir."

"Yes; it being your own name; but, poor Hugh's nugget was stolen from him one night, and he has never seen it since. He still lives in hopes of finding it."

"Did he have no suspicion of who the thief was?"

"None. It was taken while he slept, one night. It hit him hard, for he was going to return home with his find, as it was worth many thousand dollars."

"He has indeed been unfortunate, sir; but, now to the other letters you have there."

"Here is one which tells that Mr. Marcey, when a young man, and a lieutenant in the army, married secretly a Gypsy Queen who had saved his life.

"He resigned from the army and joined the Gypsy band, remaining with it for several years, and until the Mexicans one night attacked their camp and massacred all save half a dozen, who escaped.

"Mr. Marcey was one of those who escaped, and believing his wife and child to be dead, he returned to civilized life and began to grow rich, marrying again, and this man, the Mad Sport, is the son by his second wife.

"But, it seems that his Gypsy wife was not killed then, nor was her son, and now, in some mysterious way, it is discovered that the eldest son lives, and is said to be a

splendid fellow, a well-to-do rancher in Arizona.

"How his existence became known, or how the secret marriage was found out Hugh Holcomb does not relate, he seeming to be under a pledge of secrecy; but, here is the address of the first son, known as Julian Marcey, and if his mother, Bonita, the Gypsy Queen, is still alive, then Maybrick Marcey, the Mad Sport, has no claim upon the estate of the millionaire, his father, if Mr. Marcey is dead.

"Take the papers, Nat, look them carefully over, and start upon the trail whenever you are ready."

"I will be ready to-morrow night, sir; but alas, it is now too late to save the millionaire, I very much fear," was New York Nat's response.

CHAPTER V.

NEW YORK NAT AND HIS ALLIES.

IN an old deserted mansion in the city of New York, surrounded by several acres of overgrown land, and with a burying ground in the rear, a place shunned by all as a dreaded spot and haunted house—New York Nat made his home, and here his band of young Ferrets were wont to congregate and receive the orders of their chief.

The young chief and his Unknown Gamin Ferrets were a mystery to the police and the Secret Service men, an enigma which they could not solve.

Almost daily were notices sent to the Secret Service chief, through Sherman Canfield, the ally of the young Ferrets, of crimes committed of deeds of outlawry planned to be done, and where "wanted" crooks could be caught, and these mysterious "Unknowns" were making fame and fortune for themselves, though, for some reason best known to the members only of the band they preferred to work under cover and remain wholly hidden as to just who and what they were.

Their band was run with military discipline; their laws were severe and strictly obeyed; and the Ferrets were proud of their gallant chief, New York Nat, and his sister—their Mascot Queen, yet whom they did not know save as their Queen—not even knowing her by sight, as, at their meetings in the old Haunted Mansion, she was invariably masked.

In rewards offered New York Nat had accumulated a small fortune for himself and his Ferrets, and the band was bound thus together by bonds which death alone could sever.

It was the night following the day of the interview between Sherman Canfield and New York Nat that the "Unknowns" began to assemble by special call in the assembly room of the old mansion, the keeper of which, in the absence of the young chief, was a huge and savage dog who seemed to know each gamin detective by name as well as sight.

The two chairs behind the table were occupied by New York Nat and Olive, the Mascot Queen of the Ferrets.

She was masked, as usual, and wore a robe-like domino concealing her form.

The dog was in the cellar, acting as sentinel against any intruder, and the band, a score in number, were ranged on seats in front of the chief and the Mascot.

In a few words New York Nat explained to the band that he was going to the Wild West on a detective trail, and that two of the band, Keno and Freckles, must accompany him.

"For the rest of you I have special work," he continued, "to which you must all devote your whole time and write me to an address I will give you the daily results of your shadowing.

"This work is to find out what has be-

come of Millionaire Malcolm Marcey, who disappeared from his home some time ago, and is thought to have fallen overboard from the Long Branch steamer.

"Such was not the case, I now am quite certain, for he was kidnapped by two men for their further use. I have made a sketch from memory of the scene as I myself saw it—the *coupe*, the driver and the men.

"The two men who came out with Mr. Marcey were, I am sure, (for I was watching them as suspicious characters) members of the old Devil's Den Gang of the Five Points.

"The time they took him away was at dusk. The *coupe* had no number, so came from a stable doubtless.

"With these facts to work on I believe you can find out where Mr. Marcey was taken and where he probably is now.

"I am going to the mines in Colorado to find the man who wanted to get rid of Mr. Marcey, and together we must fathom this mystery and bring the guilty plotters to justice.

"You, Keno and Freckles, must meet me at the eight o'clock train for the West to-morrow night *via* the New York Central road; and Parson, you will be in charge of the band until my return, subject of course to the orders of our Queen, to whom you are to report as to me, and to notify of any important discoveries you may make, leaving your communications in our private box.

"Now, boys, that you know just what to do, the meeting is adjourned."

The band dispersed quietly in twos and threes, and New York Nat escorted Olive, the Mascot, to her home in a little cottage on the Hudson River, where he was wont to take his meals.

After a late interview with Sherman Canfield, the next afternoon, New York Nat, and his two comrades, took the train for the far West.

CHAPTER VI.

ON A FRONTIER TRAIL.

"PALS, does yer see them three gerloots as come in on the stage from the East?"

"We sees 'em, Doc."

"Does yer know 'em?"

"No, but they is tenderfeet, sure."

"Yas, out here, but where they belongs they hain't greenhorns."

"You knows 'em then, Doc?"

"Yas, and they knows it all."

"You don't think they is tenderfeet, then?"

"Oh yes, out here, but as I said, not where they belong."

"Who is they, Doc?"

"Yorkers."

"From the city, eh?"

"Yas, from the great burg itself."

"Runaways, I take it, come West to fight Injuns and road-agents."

"Not much!"

"What then?"

"I'll tell you what; they is young ferrets."

"What? them young fellows—the spring chickens?"

"Has you forgotten that there was a band o' secret ferrets in New York, unknown young fellers who run down the Devil's Den Gang?"

"No, Doc; I remembers 'em well now, for it was they who made us skip."

"You bet they did, Benson! and I tell you they is out here on some trail, dead sure."

"Does yer think that, Doc?"

"Sure of it, for I recognizes the handsome feller who is boss of the trio, and I tell you he it was who wiped out the Devil's Den Gang. I has seen one of the others at Police Headquarters, so I tell you they is out here for work."

"Shadowin'?"

"Sure as Saint Peter."

"Us?"

"Maybe so."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"Watch which way the cat jumps and then bag it."

"I'm with you, for we can't afford to be run in now."

"You bet we can't!"

"They is not going to stay here, I take it."

"No; but, whichever way they goes we'll keep 'em company, for now I knows that young one for certain, and you bet I won't let him slip this time for I'm sure now that he is on to us."

"Lordy! does yer mean it?"

A whispered response was given, then the two men arose from their seats and walked away.

They were two rough looking fellows, dressed as miners, wearing slouch hats, top boots and a belt of arms.

They had been seated in front of a mining-camp tavern in the far West, a terminus of the stage trail to the nearest railway station.

The persons they spoke of were three youths who had arrived by the stage an hour before.

The three had gone in to dinner, and afterward had a talk with the landlord in regard to purchasing horses and an outfit for the mountain mining camp of Golden Nugget.

"It is a long and dangerous trail, young pards, and you'll want a guide and an escort there, if you will not wait for a wagon train or party to go through."

"No escort, landlord. We came out here to rough it and take our chances, and we can follow the trail, I guess, so we will get an outfit and start at dawn to-morrow," the spokesman of the trio announced.

"All right. If you will go through alone I'll say no more. I've got horses to sell and can fit you out to the queen's taste, you bet, if you've got the dust to pay for it all."

"We are not over rich, but we've got enough to pay for what we want," was the answer.

The three youths soon selected their horses and outfit, and showed considerable cleverness in doing so.

Still refusing a guide they set out at dawn, the next morning, on the trail of the Golden Nugget Camps, the landlord of the tavern riding a mile on the way to set them right and give them full directions so that they would not go astray.

They seemed pleased at the prospect of camping on the way and being alone upon the trail, and rode along as though they were not "tenderfeet" in the Wild West, assuming an air that seemed to say:

"We know it all."

About a dozen miles had been gone over, sufficient to show them that it would have been wise to have adopted the landlord's suggestion and secured a guide, for it was no easy task to follow a trail with which they were wholly unfamiliar. They were hoping to find a good camping place for noon, when they heard the rapid clatter of hoofs behind them.

Coming to a halt and looking back they saw a horseman approaching at a gallop.

As he drew near he was seen to be well mounted and armed, and rode with the ease of a perfect plainsman.

He had a fine physique, was dressed as a miner; his face was handsome, fearless and frank, while his long blond hair fell in waving masses upon his broad shoulders.

"You are just the ones I am after, pards," he said as he drew rein before the three youths.

CHAPTER VII.

A WARNING.

THE three boys from New York looked at the horseman with some surprise, for they

recalled having seen him back at the stage station.

His manner was not hostile, however; though just why he had come after them they could not understand.

"Well, sir, here we are, and may I ask what you want with us?" said New York Nat, for he and his two comrades, Keno and Freckles, formed the adventurous trio, as has doubtless been surmised.

"I wish to save you from your foes, for you are riding into a trap."

"Indeed, sir? What foes have we here on the frontier?"

"You will know best when I tell you that I overheard two men say that they recognized you as New York Ferrets—that you had been the cause of their having to skip out of New York, and they felt sure you were not out here on a gold hunt, but perhaps after them, and so they arranged to get even with you."

"I intended to look you up, but you got away sooner than I expected, and when I heard the two men, whose room was next to mine, say they would head you off at Silver Creek Ford, I decided to ride after you and give you a warning that they intended to ambush and kill you, for out here life is held very cheap, as you will discover before you have been here long."

"You are certainly most kind, sir, but I did not notice the men you speak of," said Nat.

"That is because you were not looking for them, perhaps, but they recognized you, and you know best whether they hit you right in saying you were detectives."

Nat and his companions did not reply, and the stranger continued:

"Now, when I heard that you had gone I hastened through with my business to come on after you, for I am returning to Golden Nugget and can guide you by a trail that will avoid the ambush laid for you."

"But I am anxious to see those men, and if they wish to kill us, to have it out with them," declared New York Nat, eagerly.

"Ah! that is the true ring of courage, young pard; and, as you wish to meet them, why we will just surprise them in their ambush and you can have it out with them, for I am sure they are waiting in ambush for you at Silver Creek Ford."

"And you can guide us there, sir?"

"Yes, we can flank the ford and come upon them from the rear."

"All right, sir; lead the way, and when we get there we will see who our foes are. If they belonged to the Devil's Den Gang they are bad ones and are hiding from the hangman," explained Nat.

The stranger at once turned off at the trail they had been following and led the way over a trackless country, still bearing, however, in the direction of Golden Nugget Camps.

After a ride of ten miles they came to a stream, and the stranger then remarked:

"The ford is a mile above here, for this is Silver Creek."

"There is a cliff at the ford that we can reach and you can see the men in ambush from it."

"Leave your horses here and we will go on foot."

The three New York Ferrets obeyed, and after a walk of half an hour climbed a hill, and there, hiding among some rocks bordering the trail, they beheld two men, their horses concealed near them.

"There are your foes, and lying in ambush as I told you. Now, what do you wish to do?"

"Go down and advance upon them, and if they show fight we will settle it in their way," was New York Nat's response.

So the stranger led the way down to the plain, and New York Nat and his two comrades stepped boldly out and advanced toward the two men, who soon heard their

approach and sprung to their feet, rifles in hand.

"Benson, they is onto us! Kill 'em!" cried the man Doc, and their rifles were quickly raised to their shoulders and fired.

But, they had been surprised, where they had intended to surprise, and this so unnerved and flustered them that their aim was very unsteady, though still too close for comfort.

"Boys, it's Doc and Benson of the Devil's Den Gang. We want them for more than that," cried Nat, and he called out:

"Surrender, or we will kill you!"

The answer of the men was to fire again, and one bullet was buried in the butt of New York Nat's rifle, while the other just grazed his cheek.

"You must kill them, or they will down you," shouted the stranger, taking no part in the action. This New York Nat saw, and fired at the man Doc, bringing him to his knees, while Keno and Freckles dropped the other with their rifles.

Running upon the wounded man New York Nat saw his mistake, as he was suddenly covered by his rifle. But, ere the trigger could be pulled, the stranger fired and his bullet saved the life of the daring Delegate Detective.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEAD SECRET.

THE first of the three men who had been lying in ambush had dropped dead under the fire of those they had meant to kill, but New York Nat did not wish both of them to die and their secret he buried with them as to the fate of Millionaire Marcey, for he concluded that the two rogues were involved in that scheme.

So he had hastily aimed to wound his man and had done so.

But the man was game, and though brought to his knees by Nat's shot and badly wounded, had no idea of yielding, and so would have killed the young detective, but for the quick and timely shot of the stranger, whose bullet pierced the brain of the New York crook.

There was a moment of silent contemplation of the scene; then New York Nat sprung to the side of first one and then the other of the two men and said in a voice that surprised the stranger.

"My God! they are both dead!"

"Yes, your shot did not kill him and had I not fired you would now be dead," coldly admonished the stranger.

"Pardon me, sir. I know that I owe you my life; but with these two men dies a secret I came here to unearth."

"It is a dead secret now, and that is why I fired to wound and not kill."

"But I owe you my life, for he would have killed me as he caught me off my guard, and most deeply grateful am I to you."

Nat held out his hand which the stranger grasped and replied:

"Had I only known that you wished to secure a dying confession I would have broken the man's arm, and not have killed him, for I see that the wound you gave him was fatal."

"You know the men then?"

"Yes, sir; they are both escaped convicts and professional New York crooks; but, as you have already been so kind to us, may I ask that you do not speak of what my tongue just let slip—that I came West to learn a secret these two men could have told?"

"We are simply three boy miners, sir, come to the Wild West to seek our fortune," and Nat smiled, while the stranger answered:

"I understand, my young friend, and what you unintentionally said shall at once be forgotten."

"But you had better search your men; then we will bury them, for death makes the human form sacred in my eyes. I always

decently inter the dead, no matter what the man may have been in life."

"You are right, sir. We will bury them at once; but I will search the bodies first."

This New York Nat did most thoroughly, taking from the bodies some papers, a map well worn, and belts containing considerable money in gold and bank notes.

"These are the men I believed them to be, sir, for here is the proof," said Nat holding up the papers; then he asked:

"Are you much acquainted in the Golden Nugget Mines, sir?"

"Yes; I am mining there; but let me introduce myself, for there I am known as Nugget Nat, though, as I am not, like many men out here, ashamed of my real name I will make it known to you—"

"It is Hugh Holcomb!" quickly cried New York Nat.

"Ah! and how did you find that out?" asked Nugget Nat, surprised enough at the recognition.

"Do you know Mr. Sherman Canfield, sir?"

"Know him? Why, he is the best friend I have on earth."

"And a good friend he is of ours. I have a letter from him to you, Mr. Holcomb," and New York Nat hastily drew the letter out of an inner pocket and handed it over to him.

Hugh Holcomb quickly glanced over the letter and said, as he extended his hand:

"So you are New York Nat, the Unknown Ferret? and these are your allies, Keno and Freckles? and Canfield sends you out to fathom the mystery here and bring the guilty ones to justice?"

"Well, I am most glad to meet you—be assured of that! You will have a gigantic task on your hands, young pards; but, I have already seen you tried, and from what Canfield says, you can do what you pledge yourselves to accomplish. I can ask no more than that," and Hugh Holcomb shook hands warmly with the three Delegate Ferrets.

It was decided to bury the dead crooks there and go into camp for the night, as it was now late in the afternoon, and to continue on to Gold Nugget Camp in the morning.

But, Hugh Holcomb now regretted, as much as did New York Nat, that the killing of the two crooks closed their lips forever, and left the fate of the millionaire a dead secret.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

WHEN the dead crooks were at rest in their graves, the horses had been staked out for the night and an early supper disposed of, the Gold Miner, Nugget Nat, and his three Ferret allies, sat down for a talk—to hold a "council of war," as New York Nat put it.

Hugh Holcomb at once set to work to explain the situation to New York Nat more fully than he had written it to Sherman Canfield.

He stated that he had seen those very two crooks in Golden Nugget Camps a few days before, and in conversation with the one known as the Mad Sport, the Man Killer, while the money that had been found upon them seemed to show that they had been well paid for some service rendered.

New York Nat explained that they were the same two men whom in the city he felt he had recognized as crooks, and watching them, he had seen them enter the house of the New York Millionaire Marcey, and come out with him, take the coupe and drive away.

It had been the man Doc who had suspected that he was shadowing them, and quickly getting out of the coupe had struck him a stunning blow as he ran around the corner in chase of them.

Now the question was, what had they done

with Mr. Marcey, and this could not be discovered from death-sealed lips.

That he had his Ferrets at work to solve the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Marcey New York Nat explained, and added:

"Acquainted with the facts as they are they will find out something, and write me here at once, under cover to you, Mr. Holcomb."

"All right, a mail is due once a week in Golden Nugget, and you should hear now by the next, which will be in four days."

"But now let me tell you that the Mad Sport is carrying a very high hand in the camps now, and since I wrote Canfield, has killed three men, so that he is dreaded now by all."

"He has a companion whom no one knows, who calls himself Rio Grande Don and who is a Mexican and a dangerous man."

"The two are constantly together, and Rio Grande Don made a record for himself before he had been two days in the camps as a dead shot and a man killer."

"That he and the Mad Sport are plotting some game of deep deviltry is certain."

"And there is no doubt but that the Mad Sport is Millionaire Marcey's second son, Maybrick Marcey?"

"Not in the least, as I know well, though, as I wrote Canfield, I am pledged not to make known certain facts that I am aware of, but still I can give you information enough for you to work on."

"Well, Mr. Holcomb, as I see it, Maybrick Marcey, knowing now that he has an elder brother, and that his father, deceived into believing that he is leading an honorable life, has made his will in his favor, is anxious to get rid of Millionaire Marcey before the will can be changed through his discovery of the other son and the truth about his, Maybrick's, real life."

"To carry out this plot he set those crooks to do away with his father, and doubtless his elder brother also."

"That is just it, New York Nat."

"Now we must find this elder brother, and also, just what Mr. Marcey's fate has been."

"Exactly."

"You know the name of the elder brother and where he can be found?"

"Yes, his name is Julian Marcey, and he has a ranch on the old Mormon trail near the San Francisco Mountains in Arizona."

"Then I must look him up as soon as possible, for there is no time to lose, for I see here that those crooks had his name and just how to find him, with a note addressed to some one there who is known as Senora Bonita."

"The note is sealed as you see, but she must be an ally of the assassins, though living in the house of Julian Marcey."

Hugh Holcomb quickly took the letter, glanced at the address, and said, as he shook his head:

"My tongue is tied now, for I can say nothing; but it would be well if you delivered that note in person, and as I have sealing-wax at my camp, we can open and reseal it, so you can know its contents."

"Yes, all is fair in love and war, and this is war, Mr. Holcomb."

"Yes, and war of the worst kind, for it is war against cold-blooded assassins," sternly said Hugh Holcomb, and he added:

"Now there is another person to consider in our council of war, New York Nat."

"Who is that, sir?"

"A young girl whose destruction the Man Killer is plotting," was the response of Nugget Nat the Gold Miner.

CHAPTER X.

UNLOOKED FOR RESCUE.

"You refer to the young lady you wrote Mr. Canfield of, sir—Miss Florence Dudley?" said New York Nat in answer to Hugh Hol-

comb's remark about the young girl selected as one of the Mad Sport's victims.

"I do. She is a beautiful girl, dwelling with her father alone in this wild land. Her father has struck it rich beyond all doubt, and she is his only heir—all of which this Mad Sport knows."

"He seems to have fascinated her, and if she marries him it means that her life will be wrecked, so we must save her from him."

"We must, sir; but does her father not see the man's character and intention?"

"If he does he fears to say anything, for he appealed to me to save her from the man."

"Well, Mr. Holcomb, we are now acquainted with all the facts, and we will go into Golden Nugget Camps as three boy miners, and at once begin work in shadowing the Mad Sport, his ally Rio Grande Don, and to find out if Julian Marcey and Mr. Marcey have been killed."

"It will be better for us not to go in with you, or appear to know you, save by meeting you there."

"Yes, Nat, that will be the best plan; but, remember, I am your ally, and command my services whenever you need them, even to the death if need be."

"I will, sir," was the answer, and the party turned in for the night, the three Ferrets greatly pleased with their handsome miner ally Nugget Nat, while he was much impressed and fully satisfied with the young detectives sent out to shadow and to down the Mad Man Killer of the Mines.

Bright and early they were off on the trail the next morning, it having been decided that Hugh Holcomb should leave them after their noonday camp and push rapidly on alone to the camps of Golden Nugget, they following so as to get in after nightfall, and having been directed by their mineral just where to go and what to do upon their arrival.

They were just about to leave the noon camp, when New York Nat, glancing over the trail ahead, saw a party of horsemen coming rapidly toward them.

He at once made their coming known to Hugh Holcomb, who said quickly:

"We are in a dangerous country here, from both road agents and red-skins; but, fortunately, our camp is a perfect ambush as you see, so we hold the winning hand."

"Get the horses together, and your rifles ready, while I take a view of those fellows through my field-glass."

The young Ferrets were delighted with the prospect of an adventure, and were soon in readiness for a fight, if need be.

As New York Nat approached the spot where Hugh Holcomb lay concealed, viewing the coming party through his glass, the latter said:

"They are three in number, and one is a woman."

"A woman?"

"Yes; and more—it can be none other than Florence Dudley. She must have been kidnapped, for I know those two men as I can now make them out—there! I see her now distinctly! It is indeed Florence Dudley."

"Then we must rescue her," quickly decided the New York Delegate.

"By all means, but—" and after a pause he continued:

"I must not be known in this matter, so I will go into hiding, yet be near if I am needed, but if not needed I will go on to the camps."

"Yes, they have her bound to her saddle; and, Nat, I leave it to you to rescue her."

"If you can do so without killing the men, make them prisoners and learn what you can from them, taking them to Golden Nugget with you."

"It will be a feather in your cap if you rescue the girl, and my word for it, the

miners will quickly relieve you of all prisoners, should you take them with you."

"I leave all to you, and now I am off."

With this Hugh Holcomb hastened to his horse, mounted and rode away into hiding in a pine thicket near by.

The kidnappers and their prisoner, meanwhile, were drawing near the rocks that concealed the three Tenderfoot Detectives, and it could now be seen with the naked eye that their captive was indeed tied to her saddle.

"Pards, we must make them surrender if we can, but not let them escape if they refuse."

"They are riding right into our trap, and be careful not to hurt the young lady."

"Freckles, you cover the man on the right, and you Keno, take the fellow on the left, but don't fire until you see they will escape, and I will stand ready as a reserve."

"Now here they come!"

Three minutes after the two men, bronzed, bearded, evil-faced fellows, with their captive between them, rode in among the rocks through which the trail wound.

They had ridden hard, as their horses showed, and cast glances behind them as though fearing pursuit.

Suddenly New York Nat's voice commanded:

"Halt and surrender, or we will kill you!"

A yell of terror broke from the lips of one of the men, with the words:

"Wheel and run for it, pard!"

"Drop your man, Keno," shouted Nat.

He was obeyed, while dashing out of his covert, the young Delegate Detective seized the bridle-rein of the other kidnapper, and held a revolver in his face with the command:

"Surrender, or I pull trigger!"

CHAPTER XI.

FERRETS TO THE RESCUE.

SEEING his comrade fall, his bridle-rein in an iron grip, a revolver thrust under his nose, and two others coming to confront him, the remaining kidnapper did not carry out his intention to fire upon New York Nat, but, dropping his revolver hastened to raise his hands above his head while he cried:

"Don't shoot, for I pass!"

Nat had had such experience in dealing with city crooks that he at once unbuckled the belt of arms from about the man's waist, and then ordered him to dismount.

This order was sullenly obeyed; then Keno and Freckles tied him with a dexterity that was surprising to him and he growled out:

"Who be you, anyhow?"

"Boy miners, going to hunt up a fortune. Are we on the right trail to Golæn Nugget Camps?"

"No, but I'll guide you there," said the man, promptly, while the young girl now spoke for the first time and said:

"Yes, sir, you are on the right trail, and I can guide you there."

"This man only wishes to guide you to where he has accomplices who are to take me in charge, while he returns to the camps, for they kidnapped me this morning from my home there."

New York Nat gazed into the face of the speaker with admiring interest. It was a beautiful face, with large, earnest blue eyes, shaded by long lashes, and an expressive mouth.

The girl was slender in form and wore a most becoming blue cloth riding habit, while a slouch hat and black plume sheltered her head with its wealth of nut-brown hair.

"I will follow your guidance not his, miss, and return you to your home; but, I wish

we could take in the accomplices you speak of," Nat remarked.

"I have discovered from what they said, sir, that they are about five miles from here; but, just where, I do not know, nor how many of the villains there are."

"It will be best for you to go right on to Golden Nugget, I think, strapping the dead man to his saddle and strapping the prisoner, also, for he is a bold, tricky ruffian, ready for any treachery."

"We were just breaking camp, miss, when we saw you coming, so will you not have some dinner and rest awhile before we start?"

"I will, indeed, for I am as hungry as a bear," was the cheery response, and while Keno set about getting dinner, Freckles looked after the prisoner. Nat unfastened the lariat that bound the fair captive and led her to a place where she could rest, while he hastened away into the pines to find Hugh Holcomb and report the situation.

"I know all, for I saw your brave rescue, Nat," said Hugh coming forward.

"They have accomplices some miles from here, sir, to whom they were to deliver the young lady," Nat explained.

"I wish I knew where to find them; but you must press on rapidly to camp. I'll be there ahead of you."

"Can I tell her, sir, of your being here?"

"Not under any circumstances," quickly demurred Hugh Holcomb.

"She really owes her rescue to you, sir, as you planned it, and I thought she ought to know that you—"

"No, no! You forget that, as the Mad Sport holds her by some strange influence, she may tell him that you and I are pards, and that he must not know, for he is as cunning as he is cruel and vicious."

"Yes, we had best not take the chances of his finding out; but may he not be the one who was the real kidnapper of Miss Dudley?"

"I do not doubt but that he was; still he is too clever to be caught in it, and I doubt if those very men know him in the affair; but I will be off now, and when you reach Golden Nugget to-night go at once to the tavern with your prisoner and dead man and report that you were at your noon camp, saw the two men with the girl bound, and rescued her."

"The miners will do the rest, as you will see."

With this Holcomb waved a farewell to the young New York detective and walked rapidly away to where he had left his horse.

Returning to camp New York Nat found that the young girl was enjoying her dinner and Keno had also given something to the prisoner, but it was refused with the rag mark:

"I don't mind a leetle hunger when I'm lookin' down inter my grave, for I tell yer, boys, ther miners will hang me sart'in, so if yer don't want ter see me strung up, a sight yer'll never fergit, yer better take what money I has and let me go."

"Don't mind us, pard, for we've seen men die before and none that deserved it more than you, while we are not to be bribed," answered Keno.

Soon after the party moved off on the trail to Golden Nugget Camps, Florence Dudley riding by the side of New York Nat.

CHAPTER XII.

A GOLDEN NUGGET WELCOME.

STERN and plucky, prepared to meet the ordeal before them, New York Nat and his Ferrets rode into the Golden Nugget mining camp soon after nightfall.

They had pressed on at a brisk pace during the afternoon, the prisoner in the keepin', and Keno and Freckles leading the horse which the body of the dead kidnapper was strapped to the

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New York Nat rode by the side of Florence Dudley, and found her a most delightful companion; but he felt convinced as he studied her closely that she was under some saddening influence.

He saw her eyes droop at times, heard her sigh involuntarily, and felt sure that she carried in her heart a secret sorrow, one that was to influence her life in the future.

She certainly was a beautiful girl and a charming one as well, and the young ferret captain did not wonder that Hugh Holcomb loved her.

Knowing that she was wholly ignorant of why he had come to the mines he tried to draw her out, and she told him frankly that she was sorry that he and his comrades had come.

She told him that her father had once been rich, that they had had an elegant home, but they had lost it and her father had come to the mines and worked hard to regain his lost fortune.

He had been successful beyond his expectations, and yet they were not happy, though why she did not say.

Asked why she had been kidnapped, she said she did not know, unless it was to force from her father a large ransom for her return; but she did not know that she had a single foe in the mines.

She was wont to go on long rides alone, taking her rifle for game, and that evening her horse had been lassoed not far from home and she had been made a prisoner by the two men, who gave her no reason for their actions.

Asked if there were many men in the mines of her father's kind, possessing education, refinement and unsullied honor, Florence had at once mentioned the name of Holcomb, saying that he was a hero to admire, but one who had been unfortunate in his hunt for gold.

She spoke of him as one to admire and trust implicitly, but about whom there hung a mystery.

Of the wilder element she spoke severely, though she said one and all had always treated her with respect.

Once she spoke of the Mad Sport, saying:

"There is one man in the mines above all others whom you must avoid, in fact two of them, for he has a companion as dangerous as himself."

"I refer to one who rules the camps with rod of iron, and the name by which he is known is the Mad Man Killer."

"His companion's name is Rio Grande John, so beware of both of them, for they are deadly as rattlesnakes."

And this was the man that Hugh Holcomb's letter to Sherman Canfield had said Florence Dudley was to marry, and for whom she had discarded him.

New York Nat jotted all down in his mind, and when they at last rode into the camps they found a large body of horsemen assembling at the tavern to go out and look her up.

At their head was the Mad Sport, and somehow it had become whispered around, as Hugh Holcomb was also absent, that perhaps she had run away with him. But this her father denounced angrily, as he said that his daughter was not one to run away, that she had been kidnapped by some one seeking his gold, and he was willing to pay largely for her return to him.

Just then the party rode up, and a great shout went up as Florence was recognized, and all gazed curiously at the three young Ferrets with her, the prisoner and the dead man.

What a warm greeting from her father, before turned to the excited crowd and the story of her being kidnapped, bound, the rapid flight until halted by the three big gold-hunters who had come to Golden City to seek their fortune.

Aud cheers greeted her story, and the

three Boy Gold Hunters were invited again and again to:

"Slip inter ther baran' hev suthin'."

But the invitation was declined with thanks, Nat acting as spokesman, and saying that they had not yet learned to drink after the western style.

Most of the crowd cheered this sentiment, but one big, bearded, hard-faced fellow with a strong following took umbrage at their refusal, and said as he stepped up to New York Nat:

"Yer has got ter do in Golden Nugget as we does here, and put on no citified airs. I calls for three straight whiskies for you, and ef yer don't drink 'em then I slits yer ears as I 'ust ter mark pigs, so as I'll know yer ag'in."

"Red Nose Jack, set up three glasses o' tanglefoot fer these three tenderfoot kids, and pards all 'round, watch 'em guzzle 'em, er see me put my brand upon 'em—see?"

"Drink the rum, boys, for that is Purgatory Pete, and he's the worst man in the mines," urged a miner, in a low tone.

"I will not drink the vile stuff, nor can the bully frighten us by his threats," was New York Nat's firm rejoinder, and a death-like silence followed the words of the brave Detective Delegate from the East.

CHAPTER XIII.

TAMING A TERROR.

THE words of New York Nat were heard with awe by nearly all present, for Purgatory Pete's record was too well known not to know that he would resent them.

He was one of the worst stripe of men that are to be found in the mines, and he was as ready to quarrel and kill as he was to eat and sleep.

He turned savagely upon New York Nat, as though to spring upon him, and in the interest of his movement the dead and living kidnapper and return of Florence Dudley were forgotten.

Checking his impulse, however, to rush upon Nat, the bully smiled in a cruel way and said:

"Waal, I said I would brand yer, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"I'll do it, and then spank ther three of yer and send yer ter bed."

He took out his knife as he spoke, ran his finger over the edge, and moved slowly toward the youths, as though in no hurry.

That there were several who were watching him closely he did not notice, or care, but Hugh Holcomb had joined the crowd, and Miner Dudley and Florence were gazing at him with intense interest.

Suddenly the young girl stepped forward and said:

"Purgatory Pete, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, but you are too low to have any feeling of shame."

"There are men here who will not allow you to carry out your cruel threat!" and she glanced over the crowd, while her father said quickly:

"Yes, there are men here to check you."

"Let this be my quarrel, Miss Florence, for I am watching him," and Hugh Holcomb stepped to the front amid a murmur of applause.

The desperado, meanwhile, had paused at the words of Florence, glanced about the crowd and said:

"There be men here, too, ter back me up, leetle gal; and as fer you, Nugget Nat, I'll squar' accounts with you after I has branded ther kids."

"All right, Purgatory Pete; I am ready, so settle now and do your branding afterward," was Hugh Holcomb's retort.

All knew that they stood on the brink of a volcano, that might burst forth at any moment, and the painful silence that follow-

ed—for Purgatory Pete and Holcomb had their hands on their weapons now, and scores of others were ready to draw also—was broken by New York Nat's stepping forward and saying boldly:

"I thank you, miss, and you, sir, but we expected to rough it when we came out here, and that man has sought a quarrel with us."

"Tenderfeet we are, but not cowards, and I'll settle with him the moment he attempts to carry out his threat."

There burst from the crowd a wild cheer at this, which ended abruptly as the bully made a rush at the brave young Tenderfoot Detective, knife in hand.

But before Hugh Holcomb could step forward, there was seen a lightning like movement of New York Nat's hand, his revolver was drawn, leveled and the trigger was pulled in a second of time.

There was a yell of pain and fury as the bullet shattered the hand that grasped the upraised knife, which fell to the ground.

But, the desperado drew his revolver with his left hand, when, before he could use it, again New York Nat pulled trigger and this time the left hand of the desperado was shattered, the pistol dropping to the ground, while the young tenderfoot shouted:

"Next time I'll send a bullet through your heart, Purgatory Pete."

At this moment a tall form stepped between the three Boy Gold Hunters and the gang of bullies that were now backing up Purgatory Pete and cried:

"This stops right here, men. Do you hear?"

"I hears, but my hands is torn ter pieces and my pards kills that Ferret Tenderfoot boy whether you backs him up or not," Mad Sport Marcey, and don't you forget it."

"What, not enough yet? Then take that!"

With the words the Mad Man Killer threw his revolver forward and fired, his bullet crashing through the brain of the big desperado, who dropped dead in his tracks.

"If you did take up for me, sir, it was cowardly to kill that man who could not defend himself," shouted New York Nat, now thoroughly aroused, and he fearlessly faced the Mad Sport amid a perfect silence.

The Mad Sport smiled blandly, and returning his revolver to his belt said quietly:

"Take your boy rescuer in hand, Miss Dudley, and give him a lesson in manners."

With this he turned and walked away, while some one, to change the dangerous topic into another channel, shouted out:

"Hang the kidnappers of Miss Florence!"

The cry was savagely taken up; men rushed to the dead and living kidnappers, and, in spite of a strong show of resistance, they were both quickly strung up to a tree!

There they hung at the end of lariats, the dead and living side by side, until the struggles of the latter ceased, and the crowd began to disperse, while Hugh Holcomb whispered to New York Nat:

"That ends our hope of finding out who the real kidnapper was; but, let me congratulate you upon your bold stand to-night. It has made you solid with the best men of Gold Nugget! They'll stand by you after this."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FERRET GOLD HUNTERS.

NEW YORK NAT certainly proved himself a hero that night in Golden Nugget, and others beside Hugh Holcomb came up and congratulated him upon his pluck and deadly aim, while Keno and Freckles were wild with delight at the manner in which their young captain had acquitted himself.

Miner Dudley had come up and shaken him by the hand, telling them that they must come to his home, and adding that they would always find in him a friend, while Florence urged them to go to their

cabin at least until they could find quarters for themselves.

But, the three detectives firmly refused, saying that they would stop at the tavern over night and the next day find or build a cabin for themselves, and the landlord of the tavern told them to make themselves at home in his hotel as long as they pleased, adding in a whisper:

"I owe it to you for being the cause of Purgatory Pete's death; but you must beware of the Mad Sport, for I didn't like the way he took your words to him, young feller."

Hugh Holcomb managed to get to say:

"Yes, the Mad Sport will not let your words pass unnoticed, Nat; but as I have told you you have made many friends here to-night—in fact, you are solid in Golden Nugget after this."

The three New York Ferrets were given a hen-coop of a room with three bunks in it, but made themselves comfortable, and after a hearty supper went to bed, all convinced that they were roughing it with a vengeance.

After all they had seen and passed through within the last forty-eight hours they were certainly in a fair way to become real wild Westerners, and get the tenderfoot knocked out of them.

"We'll begin work to-morrow," Nat had said to his two companions, before they sunk to sleep.

When they awoke in the morning, at the beating of a snare drum announcing breakfast at "Epicures' Hall," as the tavern was called, they saw that the camps were quiet after the stormy night.

The bodies of the kidnappers had been removed, and the miners were away to work, save a few who boarded at the hotel and the idlers and bums of the camps.

The landlord greeted them cheerfully and told them that a miner who was about to leave Golden Nugget offered to sell out his cabin and claim for a few hundred, adding:

"The only drawback to it is that it is next to the Man Killer's cabin, and you will hardly be the best of friends, I fear."

"Oh, that cuts no figure, for we won't disturb him and he must let us alone.

"I was much obliged to him for taking my part, but for him to kill that man with both hands shattered, was the act of a coward and I could not help telling him so," averred the New York boy.

"Well, watch him, that is all, for if he would kill a wounded man, you may be sure your age would be no protection to you.

"He pays me big money, and is very friendly, but he's a bad and dangerous man—No, there is no charge for your lodging and grub, boys," and he refused to take any in spite of urging.

So Nat and his companions took out their cash, counted it over as though it was all they had, when the former said:

"Here's three hundred, sir, if you think that would buy the claim and cabin."

"I'll see him," said the landlord, and when he returned he told them that the cabin and claim were theirs.

They found it a pleasant little board building, situated at the head of the valley, and within an easy walk of the large cabin home of Miner Dudley and the quarters of the Mad Sport.

There was grazing ground near for their horses, wood and water, and the claim panned out a small sum daily under hard work.

Several days passed away and the three Tenderfoot Detectives had not been idle.

They had acquainted themselves with the mines and the young Delegates had seen the Mad Sport several times, and found that he was inclined to be most friendly with them.

They also had met his close comrade, Rio Grande Don, and several times had secretly held interviews with Hugh Holcomb.

New York Nat was convinced that the Mad Sport held some secret power over Florence Dudley, and noticed that he called at the miner's house daily.

Visiting the miner and his daughter himself, Nat felt assured that at heart the Mad Sport was not welcome there, whatever might openly appear to be the truth.

"Well, boys, I've seen enough to know that the first thing to be done will be to hunt up Julian Marcey, the eldest son of the millionaire, so I will pretend to go prospecting, but really go to his ranch and see if he is living or dead. I very much fear the latter, seeing how much he is in the way of this Man Killer desperado.

"Nugget Nat says there is an Indian here who will be my guide, and is true as steel to him, so you work on here, keeping your eyes and ears open, while I go to find Julian Marcey.

"It will take me a week or ten days, Mr. Holcomb says, but I'll hardly be missed, for you will show yourselves about the camps. Steer clear of all rows, keep a close watch on the Mad Sport and his pard, and note just who are their comrades, for I'll tell you that he it was who started the cry to hang the kidnappers that night; and he killed Purgatory Pete for some reason we cannot see through, while I feel assured that he was the mover in running off Miss Dudley.

"Yes, I'll start to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TENDERFOOT DETECTIVE.

In a secret meeting with New York Nat, Hugh Holcomb had arranged that the young detective was to leave the camp at night, under the guidance of the Indian whom he had spoken of.

The red-skin was a hunter, and made money enough by bringing in game to buy his food, ammunition and whisky and that was all he wanted.

He had been found in the mountains one day by Hugh Holcomb, wounded, and his death would have followed, had not the young miner brought him to camp and tenderly cared for him.

He was known in the camps as Chief, and not once had he ever shown a wish to return to his people, the Utes.

"Chief knows the country perfectly, Nat, and will guide you to the ranch of Julian Marcey, for here is a map I have drawn showing its location.

"You may be too late to save him, but if he has been done away with it will be another crime to place at the door of Maybrick Marcey, and I think your idea to find out if both father and brother have been done away with a good one.

"If he has been killed, then we must find out if the two New York crooks did the work, or the Mad Sport has other hirelings to aid him."

With full instructions then to guide him, New York Nat bade Keno and Freckles good-by soon after nightfall and mounting his hardy pony rode to the spot where he was to meet Hugh Holcomb and the Indian.

They were there awaiting him, and grasping the miner's hand in farewell the Tenderfoot Detective started off on his mission, the Ute chief leading the way, mounted upon a tough, wiry little mustang.

They went into camp when well away from the last miner's cabin, and slept until dawn, when they again started upon the trail.

Thus three days and nights went by, Chief unerringly keeping his course, and, as they went along, teaching New York Nat much that he was glad to learn of frontier life, trailing and what a career in the Wild West really meant.

"Pale-face young brave heap big head, see much, know heap—no tenderfoot," said Chief admiringly one day as he saw how

quickly and well New York Nat was catching on to what he was teaching him.

"I'm awful pleased to know it, Chief; but I confess that I am a real tenderfoot out here, though if you were in New York I guess I could give you a few pointers," replied Nat.

"No like pale-face village—love red-man's country," said Chief.

It was in the evening of the third day that the Ute said:

"Ranch yonder by mountain."

"Sleep there to-night."

Before them rose the white peaks of the San Francisco Mountains, and about them the country had become more fertile and cheering to ride through, contrasted with the barren lands behind them, almost waterless and treeless the past two days.

The Indian had been told that the ranch of the man they sought was at the base of the San Francisco Mountains, and he had gone there unerringly.

There soon came in sight a large log cabin situated among the foot-hills, and in the green, well watered valleys near were a number of cattle and ponies feeding, a couple of cowboys in charge.

They eyed the Indian and New York Nat as they approached, and the latter saluted them politely and asked if it was the ranch of Mr. Julian Marcey that was in sight.

"It is, pard, but he hain't at home," was the answer.

"I am sorry, for I have come a long way to see him."

"Where from?"

"Gold Nugget mining camps up in Colorado."

"Thar's where ther cap'n is."

"Indeed?"

"I am sorry I did not know it."

"When did ye go there?"

"Some two months ago, I guesses."

"Is he mining?"

"Dunno, but he's thar, for his ma got a letter from him only two days ago."

"His mother?"

"Yas, and we thought maybe you had come through with a letter for her."

"Where is she?" asked New York Nat, his curiosity excited.

"Up at the ranch, so you better go up and see her."

"I will, thank you," and Nat rode on toward the ranch, having gained much food for thought, for he muttered as he rode along:

"His mother at the ranch, eh?"

"Then she was not killed as was supposed, and if she lives, then Millionaire Marcey's second marriage was not legal, and the Mad Sport could not inherit the fortune if it was known."

"I must go slow and with care."

CHAPTER XVI.

NAT MEETS THE GYPSY QUEEN.

It was a great surprise to New York Nat to learn that the man he sought was in the very camps he had left to seek him.

What had taken him there he could not understand, for he was sure that he knew nothing of his father, and that he possessed an enormous fortune that would be his at his death.

"Chief, whatever I say here you must swear to, for I've got news I didn't look for," said Nat as they approached the cabin.

"Me talk straight," was the Ute's reply, and Nat turned his attention to the ranch before him.

It was finely located upon the brow of a hill, and the cabin was as strongly built as a fort, for there was reason to dread a raid by the Navahoes at almost any time.

The cabin had four rooms in it, divided by wide hallways that ran through in both directions, and it was surrounded by a board roof piazza.

Hanging upon the walls were saddles,

bridles, lariats, spurs, and several weapons, while seated in a rustic chair watching their approach was a woman engaged in sewing.

Nat gazed fixedly at her as he drew near and muttered:

"If she is not a Gypsy she belies her looks."

He saw a woman of forty apparently, tall, handsomely formed and attired in a picturesque costume that betook of the Mexican and Gypsy.

Her face was dark, very dark, her hair black as night and around her head was a silver band netted across the top.

She wore massive earrings, a necklace, and her arms were covered with bracelets, as were her fingers with rings, while buckles were upon her small red slippers.

Her features were regular and handsome, her teeth white as milk and the eyes were grandly lustrous and expressive.

"It's the Gypsy Queen Mr. Marcey married and believed dead, or I am greatly mistaken," muttered Nat, and doffing his hat politely he said:

"Pardon me, madam, but I came here from Golden Nugget to seek Mr. Julian Marcey."

"My son is away from home, young man; but you are welcome, so come in and I will make you feel at home," she replied with a decided accent in her English, yet in a voice that was strangely soft and musical.

Nat dismounted and gave his rein to Chief, who led his horse away, going with a Mexican who came at the call of the woman.

"You are young, senor, to be following the trail in this wild land, and in company with a red-skin," she said.

"I know the Indian, madam, and he is a true friend to me, though I am what you call out here a tenderfoot."

"Yes, a tenderfoot in frontier experience perhaps, yet well versed in other knowledge, I take it

"So you came here to see my son?"

New York Nat, young as he was, had become a deep reader of human nature, and he had been closely studying the face of the woman and he determined to go slow, to make haste slowly and be sure of his ground so as to make no mistake.

"Yes, madam, I came to see Mr. Julian Marcey."

"You came from Golden Nugget Camps, I believe?"

"Yes, madam."

"And he is there."

"I am sorry I did not know it."

"He has been there for some time, and you must have seen him for he is one to attract attention."

"I did not even hear his name spoken."

"Will you describe him, please, madam, and I can tell you if I saw any one answering the description."

"He is there, for I lately had a letter from him."

"But he is a tall man, with broad shoulders and an elegant form, a face as dark as mine and just the one to win a young girl."

"He has a long silken mustache and imperial, wears his black hair falling upon his shoulders, dresses in Mexican attire and is about thirty years of age."

"Do you recall seeing such a person?"

New York Nat was about to reply when he checked himself, and remaining silent for a moment, asked:

"You say he dresses as a Mexican, madam?"

"Yes, he is a Mexican Gypsy, as I am."

"I only wish I could have met him, for it is a long ride here on a useless errand."

"Perhaps I can tell you what you would know if you will make your business known to me, his mother."

Nat hesitated an instant, and then said, earnestly:

"In case I should miss him upon his return, I will tell you why I came."

"Not now, come in to supper," and the woman led the way.

CHAPTER XVII.

NAT GROWS CAUTIOUS.

NAT was shown a pleasant room, in which there was a large hammock swung instead of a bed, and having made his toilet by brushing off the dust of travel, he went into the supper-room and sat down to a most tempting meal.

The woman was not long in making known to him that she had been the queen of a once powerful band of Gypsies, but war and disease had reduced them until in the end the remnant had all been wiped out by an Indian massacre, only her son and herself escaping.

She seemed to like to talk of herself, and also stated that she had married an American army officer, and that he had deserted her at the time of the massacre, and she had never seen him since, but had reason to believe that he was still living, though at first she had believed he had been killed by the Indians.

The chief of the Comanche band had spared her life, and her little son's, on account of having once been kindly cared for by her people, and in time she had bought their freedom from the Indians, and had, as her people had been wiped out, become a ranch-owner, for she had gotten some money from where her father had buried it.

She had taken her son to the East to be educated, but they had, after a few years, pined for their wild life, and they had returned to it, purchased the ranch they then lived on and were contented.

Nat listened with deepest interest to the story of the woman, for it agreed with that which Hugh Holcomb had written to Sherman Canfield, and which he had read in the various papers he had then with him.

As they returned to the piazza the woman excused herself for a moment and Nat hastily drew from his pocket a small miniature set in gold and glanced at it, while he slowly shook his head, and then opening a letter, one of those given him by Canfield, he read it over, and again came that significant shake of the head.

The woman soon returned and handing a miniature set in gold to the youth said:

"There is my American husband as he looked when he won my heart."

"He was a handsome man, and I loved him with all my soul."

"He resigned from the army and became one of our people, but then came the massacre, and that ended my dream of love."

The likeness was of a handsome young man in the uniform of a cavalry officer, and upon it was engraved:

"MALCOLM MARCEY,

"Lieutenant —th Dragoons,

"U. S. ARMY.

"To BONITA, MY GYPSY QUEEN."

"I will now hear why you came to see my son, senor," said the woman, and there was a look of nervousness about her, an anxiety to learn just why he had come.

"I am a clerk in an attorney's office, madam, in New York, and I came here in the interest of your son."

"In fact I will tell you the truth, as I must make it known to him, for you can doubtless give me more information than he could."

"I know that I can," was the eager reply.

After a moment New York Nat said:

"You are right in your surmise that Mr. Malcolm Marcey is alive, or rather he was until several months ago."

"He married again, however, years after, believing you were dead, and his son also."

"He married a Southern lady of great wealth and beauty, and she died after the birth of twin sons, one of whom also died."

"The other was raised by his father, but as he grew toward manhood he became very wild, grew dissipated, gambled, and so squandered money that his father at last threatened to cut him off unless he changed his ways."

"He promised to do so, came West, wrote his father that he had found a ranch well stocked with cattle, which he could purchase at a bargain."

"His father sent him the money, and believed his letters home telling how he had reformed and was working hard, while in reality he had squandered the money and had developed into a border desperado, known as Mad Maybrick the Man Killer."

"In some way he learned of his father's former marriage and that he had an elder brother, and so he plotted to get rid of his father and brother and thus secure the large fortune that he would thus inherit."

"A bold plotter indeed, senor."

"Yes, madam."

"But I would still stand in the way, for not being dead, Mr. Marcey's son by his second marriage would have no claim."

"True, but he seemed not to know of you, only of his brother, and I know that he sent hirelings East to get rid of his father."

"What has become of Millionaire Marcey I do not know, but he mysteriously disappeared, and in the company of two men, whom I have the proof were bribed by Maybrick Marcey to put his father out of the way."

"Too late to save Mr. Marcey I came here to warn his eldest son of his danger, and to tell him that he is the heir to the millionaire's fortune."

"But you tell me he is in the camps where his murderous brother now dwells, and, if he knows who he is will plot to kill him."

The woman smiled in a strange way and replied:

"As I know now why you are here, senor, I will place confidence in you and tell you a secret."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GYPSY QUEEN'S SECRET.

"YOUNG senor, both my son and myself have much to thank you for, as you are to place in our hands a fortune, if my husband is dead, or give us a claim upon our rights, if he lives, as the wife and son of a millionaire."

"Of course, as you act for an attorney, you will expect pay, and your reward will be a liberal one, I pledge you, and I wish now to tell you that individually I desire you to serve my interests and most liberally will I recompense you."

"You are very kind, madam."

"However you may serve your employers, you must serve us, myself and my son, better; and in possession of the facts on both sides, you can the better act for our interest."

"That is true, madam, and I appreciate your kindness toward me, for you know an attorney's clerk is not paid a large salary."

"That I do not know about, but you will find that the one who serves me, Queen Bonita, will be well paid."

"I thank you."

"Now let me tell you that it has not been very long since we knew of Mr. Marcey's being alive and that he had married again."

"It came to my son's ears through one he befriended, and who accidentally told the story, when he heard Julian's name was Marcey."

"But my son kept his own counsel, and also learned that his half-brother was a wild

fellow in Golden Nugget Camps, and known as the Mad Sport and Man Killer from his desperate deeds.

"Having assured himself that his father lived, and that this desperado of the mines was his heir, Julian decided to act for his protection and mine."

"So he went to the mines and became the pard of the Mad Sport."

"Of course he knew just what he was to him, but did not allow his half-brother to suspect his identity."

"He pretended to know the whole story of Millionaire Marcey's life, that he had an elder son then living, and whom it was necessary to get out of the way if he, Maybrick Marcey, expected to inherit the fortune as the direct heir of Malcolm Marcey."

"Thus he gained the confidence of his half-brother and undertook to put Julian, himself, out of the way for certain considerations, as also the old man."

"Then he was told that the latter deed had already been arranged for by the Mad Sport, who had employed two men he knew the life of, to put his father out of the way."

"To kill him?"

"No, strange to say that, Man Killer though he is, he shrank from taking his father's life even by proxy, so the two men were hired to take Mr. Marcey from his home and carry him under the pretense of his being a maniac, to a small private asylum in a Western State."

"This the men did?"

"Yes, though Maybrick Marcey would not tell my son where the asylum was, and the two men Julian was unable to see."

"Then he does not know where Mr. Marcey is confined?"

"No, but I suppose he can be traced."

"Doubtless, madam, and as he is not mad, he will be released, while you as his wife, can prove your claim, and your son's, and be restored to your rights, as Maybrick Marcey certainly has no claim upon his father in a legal way."

"That is just it, and now in possession of the facts you can arrange the whole affair for us."

"I think so; but I must find Mr. Marcey first."

"Yes, I will give you a letter to my son, and perhaps he may now know where he is hidden, or can, in some way find out."

"Then you will see him, tell him that I and his darling boy Julian still live, and are anxious to be taken into his heart and home after all these long years of cruel separation."

"But what about this second son, for he is a very dangerous man?"

The woman smiled, and it expressed volumes, while she replied:

"Yes, and my son is a very dangerous man too, señor, and between us, this man the Mad Sport must be gotten rid of."

"It would be just as well for several reasons," coolly said Nat.

"One would be that he would kill my son, rather than yield his claim to him, but remember, he does not know Julian while Julian does know him and thus holds the advantage."

"Very true; but there is a legal point to be taken into consideration too."

"What is that, señor?"
"Should Mr. Marcey have died, for he is an old man, and the charge of being mad may have broken him down, or he may have gone mad in earnest, which is just as bad."

"And then?"
"In either case his son Maybrick is his heir, and his will is made."

"But I live and so does Julian."
"The law would have to be assured fully, and it would be years before perhaps proof could be found, so you might be old before you won your case."

"That is true—you have a wise head," the woman said anxiously.

"Yes, it would complicate matters for you."

"But with Maybrick Marcey dead my claim could come in, there being no other claimant, and we would be secure."

"Far more than if Maybrick Marcey lived."

"Then he must die," savagely said the woman; but she quickly added in a milder tone:

"That he is a desperado all know, and he has been deceiving his father and persecuting him."

"He is a murderer, and should be hanged—yes he must be gotten out of the way."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE INDIAN GUIDE'S DISCOVERY.

NEW YORK NAT saw that the woman meant just what she said.

The Mad Sport was a dangerous man—so was Julian Marcey, his half-brother.

The Mad Sport was plotting against his father, and to get rid of his half-brother, and the latter was then his companion in Golden Nugget Camps, and unknown to him, so he held the whip hand over him.

Nat ran over the situation rapidly in his mind, and as was his wont, quickly came to a conclusion as to what was best to be done.

So he said:

"Well, Madam Bonita, I had better return to Golden Nugget and carry a letter to your son from you, telling him who I am, and we can work together."

"Yes, yes."

"I can then arrange with Mr. Julian Marcey what is best to be done, and he can perhaps find out in some way just where his father is held in confinement."

"Yes, you must find that out."

"Then we can plot to get rid of Maybrick Marcey, the Mad Sport, in some way, and if Mr. Marcey is living, and in his right mind, all will be plain sailing for you and your son as claimants."

"Yes, yes, you understand, I see"

"You are wise beyond your years, my young friend, and you shall be well rewarded."

"At last I see a ray of hope, I see the prospect of realizing a dream that will place me in a luxurious home, living a life of pleasure, and with servants, horses and carriages at my command."

"Yes, I see hope ahead, and you, young señor, shall be well remembered," and the woman clasped her hands in an ecstasy of delight at the luxurious picture that floated before her vision of what her future life would be.

"When do you wish to start upon your return, young señor?" she asked, as though anxious now not to delay him.

"I will depart after an early breakfast in the morning, madam, and while you write the letter I will see my Indian guide and tell him to be ready."

"Yes, I will give you fresh horses, the best on the ranch, in the place of your tired animals."

"I thank you, madam."

"And will see that your provision-bag is well supplied, while what money you may need my son will let you have, for he has plenty with him."

"Again I thank you, Madam Bonita," and Nat arose and went out to the corrals in search of the Ute chief.

He failed to find him, and was returning to the cabin when he met the Indian.

"Well, Chief, been well taken care of?"

"Oh, yes, heap plenty to eat."

"We return after breakfast in the morning."

"Me ready."

"The lady will give us fresh horses and plenty to eat."

"Good, me get along all right; but vaquero go too."

"Who?"

"Mexican cowboy go too."

"How do you know?"

"Hear squaw say so."

"You heard the Gypsy woman tell him to go?"

"Yes, she call him and tell him we go after breakfast, he start two hours before we."

"He must ride very fast, taking his best horse, and get to camps ahead of we, and give letter to her son."

"She tell him not to let us see him on trail or at camp."

"Ah!" and New York Nat gave a low whistle of surprise and said quickly:

"Say, Chief, can we overtake that *vaquero*?"

"Yes."

"How, if he has a better horse than we will ride?"

"Him horse get lame on trail—Chief knows."

"All right, I'll leave it to you, but don't let the *vaquero* know that you are aware he is going."

"No see Chief—me slip away like snake."

"Good! I will go back now and not let them know I found you; but did the woman see you when she told the *vaquero* he must go to the camps?"

"No see Chief—me slip away like snake."

"You know your business, Chief, and I wish I had you as one of my band of Unknown Ferrets in New York."

The Ute did not comprehend the compliment but smiled as though he knew something had been said in his praise, and New York Nat at once retraced his way to the cabin and asked the Gypsy Queen if she would not send a man to look up his Indian guide for him.

This she did and Chief soon appeared and was told by Nat to be ready to go upon the return trail in the morning.

After a long talk with the Queen that night Nat retired, and when he arose in the morning she had the letter for him to give her son.

Soon after he rode away with the Ute, promising to let Bonita hear from him as soon as all had been arranged with her son.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GYPSY'S COURIER.

ONCE New York Nat and his Indian guide had passed the Mexican cowboys, guarding the ranch cattle, and gotten well out of sight, they pressed rapidly on.

Their horses were good ones, and willing to go, while they were built for endurance as well.

A few miles out the keen eyes of the Indian saw a single trail coming into the one they were traveling, and he said in his laconic way:

"Vaquero trail."

"Then he is ahead of us without doubt."

"Oh, yes, me see him go early."

"Good!"

"And me fix pony so not go far."

"Better still; but I hope you did not have to make the horse suffer."

"No, me fix him all right—tie hair round his leg, make him heap lame bimeby."

"You are a dandy, Chief; but then will not the *vaquero* avoid us?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then how will we catch him, for you are the doctor in this case, and I am a tenderfoot you know."

"Yes, Chief know," was the reply in a tone that New York Nat did not think was altogether complimentary as to his frontier education; but he said:

"You can plot some way to bag him without killing him."

"No want kill him?"

"Oh, no."

"Him only a Greaser."

"Never mind what he is."

"Him have good scalp."

"Well, this ain't no scalping expedition, Chief, so we must catch the man without killing him, though what to do with him afterward I do not know."

"Now how will we catch him, Chief?"

"See hill yonder?"

"Yes."

"From top of hill see long way."

"Vaquero's horse get lame he turn back to get another."

"No matter how lame, he ride him, for *vaquero* never walk."

"We wait for him to come back, and Chief have lasso and catch him, for me lie hid on side of trail."

"Chief, you have got it down fine, and we will bag the *vaquero* without doubt."

"Then we must decide what to do with him."

"No want him, take him to camp, tell miners he horse-thief, they hang him."

"Well, Chief, under your training I will not be a tenderfoot long."

"Why, you can give me pointers at my own game."

"But we'll catch the *vaquero* first and then let circumstances decide as to the future for him."

They had now reached the summit of the ridge and the Indian guide peeped over.

"He come, pony heap lame."

"Look!"

New York Nat dismounted and looked over the hill, just where a bush concealed him from view.

"Yes, there he is."

"Him come back here, take trail where he come in, so as not to meet us, and go back to ranch for another horse."

"And we must head him off here?"

"Yes, catch him with lariat."

New York Nat then rode back out of sight, taking the horses with him, while the Ute chief selected a spot where he could lie in hiding and not ten feet from the trail the *vaquero* would pass by.

The Ute fastened one end of his lariat around a scrub pine growing near, and coiling the other held it in hand ready for use.

Watching from his hiding-place New York Nat held the greatest interest in the result.

He was always fond of a life of adventure and he was beginning to like the career upon the frontier, even though he was a tenderfoot.

He saw the head of the *vaquero* appear over the ridge, then the shoulders, and the horse limped painfully into sight.

Another moment and there shot forth from behind the rocks a little dark cloud, it settled over the head of the *vaquero*, the startled pony gave a spring forward and the rider was dragged from his saddle.

New York Nat ran rapidly to the scene to find the Indian standing over the prostrate form.

The *vaquero* lay as he had fallen, all in a heap, the lariat still wound about his body.

His horse had gone but a few paces away, and halted, holding one foot up from the ground.

"Catch his horse, Chief," cried Nat as he approached.

"Pony all right, won't run away."

"But the man is unconscious—the fall stunned him."

"Maybe so, no talk, look like dead—fell hard."

The youth bent over him and placed his fingers upon his pulse.

Then he laid his hand upon his heart.

"Stretch him out, Chief, for he seems badly hurt."

"There is no heart-beat."

The head fell forward in a strange way as they moved him.

Nat at once raised it, and it fell back the same way as before.

"My God! his neck is broken."

"Him dead, maybe so," quietly said the Ute.

"Yes, he is dead."

"You did not mean to kill him, but the fall broke his neck."

"Chief heap sorry."

"Make pony well now," and he walked over to the pony of the Gypsy's courier, leaving New York Nat decidedly in a quandary at the situation he found himself in.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO LETTERS.

WHEN the Indian chief reached the pony of the dead courier he raised the lame leg and running his hand along it broke a horse hair that had been wound closely about it, stopping the circulation of the blood, and thus, by an ingenious device, causing the lameness, though doing no serious harm.

Rubbing the leg for a few minutes to reduce the swelling, the Ute led the animal over to where Nat stood still regarding the body of the *vaquero*, and said:

"Bury *vaquero* now, maybe."

"Yes, we must bury him decently; but I wish the letter he carries first."

A search revealed a letter addressed in a feminine hand to:

SEÑOR JULIAN MARCEY,
By COURIER PEZO."

The letter was sealed, but thrusting it into his pocket Nat went on with his search.

There was a belt of money, evidently the man's private belongings, with some loose change in one of his pockets, a pair of revolvers, a knife, lariat, couple of *serapes* and bag of food.

This was all that he had with him.

The body was then wrapped in a *serape* and a spot not far away selected as its burial place.

The Indian dug the grave in a way that appeared to show that he had had considerable practice in that kind of work.

Then the body was placed in it and the grave filled in and rocks put on top to keep off the coyotes.

The Ute looked longingly at the scalp, as though he would have liked to have taken it, but this Nat would not hear to and with a sigh he relinquished his desire.

The horse was rapidly getting over his lameness, and mounting they rode on for an hour or more when the noon halt was made on the banks of a small stream and where there was good grass.

While the Ute prepared dinner, New York Nat sat down to look over his letters.

The first was the one he was carrying to Julian Marcey and it was sealed.

After a while it was cleverly opened and in such a way that it could be resealed and the discovery not made that it had been opened.

It was as follows:

"MY DEAR SON:—

"The bearer of this is Senor Chandler, a young attorney's clerk from New York.

"He has come West to find your father, who was kidnapped from his home, and to find you and warn you of danger from the hands of your brother Maybrick.

"We have talked over the legal aspect of the case, and he will tell you what is best to be done under the circumstances to hold our title secure, and as he is a very clever young man his advice is worthy of consideration.

"I have promised the young man a large personal reward if we win, and if he needs immediate funds you can supply him.

"Whatever is agreed upon between us as to what is best, will meet my views.

"Let me hear as soon as a move has been decided upon.

"Affectionately,

"Your

"MOTHER."

This letter New York Nat carefully sealed with the remark.

"That is all right as far as it goes; but now I'll see if the other is not more explicit."

He broke open the other letter and read:

"MY DEARLY LOVED JULIAN.—

"You will be surprised to get this letter from me telling you that an attorney in New York is on the track of your father and yourself, and is striving to thwart Maybrick Marcey from committing a double crime.

"I am not known to be alive, so am not considered in the matter.

"The attorney's agent, a most clever young fellow, with only his youth against him, came here to the ranch to find you.

"He told me what he will make known to you, that he has learned that Maybrick Marcey is aware of your existence, and that he is plotting to get rid of his father and of you.

"Fortunately you know his intention regarding yourself, and are counter-plotting.

"I told this youth that I was the real claimant to Marcey's millions, being his wife, long believed dead, and that you were his son, so we could claim the estate.

"But he presented legal complications that might arise as far as our proof was concerned, and suggested that with Maybrick Marcey out of the way matters would be easier for us, especially if Mr. Malcolm Marcey was alive and in sound mind.

"I pretended to think so too, but you know that Malcolm Marcey would discover the truth as far as you and I are concerned."

At this Nat whistled and taking out the miniature he had looked at slyly when at the ranch, he again regarded it attentively, as well as reading over one of the letters he also had with him.

"I begin to see a great big plot, and I've got to counterplot on just as extensive a scale," muttered the young Tenderfoot Detective, and he at once began to read the letter again carefully from the first.

Coming to the place where he had left off he went on as follows, unheeding the Ute's call to dinner:

"Of course, if Maybrick Marcey has incarcerated his father in an asylum, as he claims to have done, and he is still alive, we must see that he is proven insane, or dies.

"It will never do for you and I to attempt to stand the test before Malcolm Marcey in his right mind.

"Under existing circumstances then it is best to first get rid of Maybrick Marcey.

"You know that he has plotted your life, that he has pledged you a handsome sum to get rid of Julian Marcey for him, and you have accepted the duty.

"He is unpopular, feared by all, a terror, a desperado, and could readily be led into a difficulty with some one and killed, or be shot from an ambush.

"You know best how to silence him."

CHAPTER XXII.

FOREARMED.

AGAIN Nat paused and re-read the last part of the letter, striving to impress it most thoroughly in his mind as food for thought as he rode along.

Then he continued reading:

"You are on the field, so know how to act.

"With Maybrick Marcey dead, our claim has no one to dispute it.

"As Maybrick Marcey's pard you can readily plot against him.

"You wrote me of a young girl whom he intends forcing into a marriage with him just for her money, he holding some secret power over her.

"You say that he is aware that her father has an enormous fortune, which he has not

told the miners of, and that you also love this girl.

"Now with Maybrick out of the way you could marry her, thus adding to your fortune, and it would be well to discover the secret over her that he holds, so you can have the same power."

"When Maybrick is beyond recall, let me suggest that you and the youth arrange a plan to have him carry the proof of my claim as wife and yours as eldest son to Marcey's fortune."

"If need be, Malcolm Marcey must follow in the track of Maybrick Marcey, for there must be no mistake."

"You understand."

"Much influence will be carried by the youth's story, so he must be promised and paid well."

"I need say no more, but leave all in your hands."

"The youth will bring you a letter from me introducing him, but I send this ahead by Pezo, whom keep with you until you have some important tidings to bring back for me."

"I can start for New York at a moment's notice, and we are in this game to win, for there is not the shadow of a suspicion against us, and if we find old Marcey would betray then his tongue must be silenced as I said."

"Destroy this letter the moment you read it, and be sure to write me fully when your plot is formed."

"It is a fortune and a life of luxury for us in palaces, or the one we lead here for us, so win we shall."

"Ever

"Your devoted
"MOTHER."

This letter New York Nat folded and put carefully away with the miniature and the others that he carried, keeping the one given him by the woman for her son in a pocket to itself.

"Now I can eat dinner, Chief, and with an appetite, for I have had a tonic to give me one," he said cheerily, and he did enjoy the meal which the Ute had prepared out of the bounty furnished from the larder of the Gypsy Queen Ranch.

After a couple of hours' rest they mounted and pressed on once more, the pony of the dead *vaquero* having gotten entirely over his lameness, while New York Nat seeing it took a lesson in the art of how the Indian had accomplished the clever act of sending the courier back for a fresh horse, a return that had proven fatal to him.

The courier's death had relieved New York Nat at least of his presence as a prisoner, a thing that would have been most embarrassing as he would not have known what to do with him at Golden Nugget Camps.

With his own letter of introduction, and the one to Julian Marcey, New York Nat felt thoroughly forearmed for the work in hand, and he meant to lose no time in carrying out whatever plot he should decide upon.

His visit to the ranch of Julian Marcey had opened his eyes to the fact that he had left that personage, by his mother's assertion a dangerous man, in Golden Nugget Camps as the pard of the very man who was plotting his life, but who, not knowing his half-brother, did not of course suspect him.

It was a wheel within a wheel, and Nat saw that all would have to be handled most delicately to make matters come out as he intended to have them.

Discovering that Julian Marcey's mother was living, he had reason to believe that she was a very dangerous woman, and would go as far in a plot for gold as would her son.

He did not care to know much more of the career of Julian Marcey than he was then acquainted with, to discover that he was one to dread as surely as was his half-brother the Mad Sport, and he went on his way plotting and planning to find the millionaire, to

thwart both Julian and Maybrick Marcey, and save Florence Dudley, all the while pleased that he would have as a strong ally Hugh Holcomb, and the Ute Chief, not to mention his Ferret pards, Keno and Freckles.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETURN OF THE TENDERFOOT.

NEW YORK NAT and the Ute rode into Golden Nugget late at night, having made the ride back in good time.

The Indian went to his camp near Hugh Holcomb's cabin, delighted with the fact that the young detective had turned over to him the *vaquero*'s belt of gold, horse, saddle, bridle and weapons.

He was to at once acquaint Hugh Holcomb with the fact of Nat's return, and wished him to come to his camp the next morning.

Nat found no difficulty in arousing Keno and Freckles, for they had been most anxious about him ever since his departure.

They welcomed him back with warm grasps of the hands, and gave him some letters that had arrived that day for him, while they said he had not been missed by the miners, nor was his departure, they believed, known in the camps.

"I have a letter from our Queen, boys, and another from Parson," he said, and breaking them open he hastily glanced over the one from Olive the Ferrets' Mascot.

His face brightened and he said.

"They have found him, boys."

"Found who?"

"The millionaire who was kidnapped."

"The boys went to work with a will and found the *coupé* that had taken Mr. Marcey to the ferry.

"It had been hired at a down-town livery stable to take a crazy man, it was said, to the train, and they went across the ferry in it.

"Then the boys discovered that tickets had been bought for three men to Kansas City, and the state-room in the sleeper had been engaged.

"So Parson jumped the train and tracked them, discovering at Kansas City that tickets had been purchased for a little town in Kansas, and thither Parson followed to find a private asylum there, and that on a date agreeing with the time of the kidnapping of Mr. Marcey, two men had taken an old gentleman to the asylum and left him there.

"It did not take Parson long to feel convinced that the old gentleman was Mr. Marcey, held as a lunatic against his will, and so he wrote me fully the particulars and returned at once to New York.

"This is the connecting link I needed, boys, to make out my case against the Mad Sport and the two men we had to kill."

"Our Mascot's letter states that all goes well, that the papers say the police are still mystified about the fate of Mr. Marcey, and she tells me that Parson has gone West on a sure trail, she thinks."

"They held a meeting at the Haunted Mansion last night, and the boys all sent their regards to us and wished us to hurry back, as they feared we would be scalped out here in the Wild West."

"Now, boys, I am very tired, so I'll turn in, and when Mr. Holcomb comes I'll tell you with him the result of my trail, and you bet I struck it rich, as they say out here."

"Now, what of the Mad Sport?"

"He's all right and killed another man two nights ago."

"Well, the Man Killer's days are numbered; but is his pard here?"

"Rio Grande Don?"

"Yes."

"Yes, he's here all right, Cap'n Nat."

"Have you seen Miner Holcomb?"

"Yes, twice, and he seemed anxious about you, we thought."

"All right, we'll turn in now," and Nat was soon fast asleep.

The boys allowed him to sleep until they had breakfast ready the next morning, and Hugh Holcomb came up just as they finished the meal.

He welcomed Nat warmly, and said:

"The Chief told me that you got there, Nat, and I congratulate you."

"But now let me hear what was done?"

"I found that Julian Marcey is not the good little man we supposed, but a designing, dangerous fellow, one that knew only lately that his half-brother was living, and at once plotted to get rid of him."

"His mother is living, too, and—"

"That is bad, for it will hurt her deeply to know all that she must learn."

"Don't waste any sympathy upon her, for she is as wicked and dangerous as her son."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes, sir, it is a dog eat dog case all around, for to get rid of his brother Julian Marcey came here and became his friend, and is now known as his shadow, for he is no less than Rio Grande Don."

"Whew!"

"You have made a discovery, Nat."

"Wait until you hear all, Mr. Holcomb, and then say if ever you heard such a deep, devilish plot to get a fortune," and Nat then told of all that he had discovered.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CRIME UNMASKED.

HUGH HOLCOMB, Keno and Freckles listened with deepest attention to all that Nat had to tell, from his searching the Gypsy Queen's ranch until the killing of her courier and the return to Golden Nugget.

"Well, Nat, as I see it all now, the Gypsy Queen and her son were not massacred, as supposed by Mr. Marcey, and after long years finding out that he lived and was very rich, they plotted to get his fortune, when they discovered that he had married a second time, and had a son."

"Yes, sir."

"Then they decided to get rid of that son, and coming here to do so, Julian Marcey discovered the cheerful fact that his half-brother was plotting to kill him and his father."

"That is the situation, Mr. Holcomb."

"And Julian Marcey will let Maybrick put his father out of the way, while he performs a like duty for him, getting his fortune thereby, and also Florence Dudley."

"Exactly, sir."

"But you have run the secret to cover, have fathomed the mystery, and can now lay your clutches as a detective upon the two brothers."

"Yes, sir, but we must go slow, and my first move will be to send Keno after Millionaire Marcey."

"I will write a letter to the asylum, showing how the head of it has been deceived by the two men, and demand Mr. Marcey's release, and he can come West with Keno."

"And when he is here I shall strike, for I will arrest the Mad Sport and Rio Grande Don, while the Ute Chief can carry a letter to the Gypsy Queen Bonita, that will bring her upon the scene."

"She shall also be arrested, and facing Mr. Marcey, I will take them all away to be tried before a United States Court for conspiracy, attempt to defraud, kidnapping and murder."

"You are playing your cards boldly and cleverly, Nat, and you will win," said Hugh Holcomb, earnestly.

"Yes, sir, I intend to win this, my first trial as a Tenderfoot Detective, and it will save Mr. Marcey and Miss Dudley, and bring the guilty ones to punishment."

"Nat."

"Yes, Mr. Holcomb."

"Did you ever hear of Old Sloat, the guide?"

"Yes, sir, I have heard of him as an old frontiersman."

"Well, he is here in the mines, and came ill and poor, so I cared for him."

"He lay ill for weeks, but I brought him round all right, and one day, hearing my name, he told me a strange story, keeping back however facts which I most wished to know, and swearing me to secrecy upon some points."

"Now Old Sloat came into camp again to-day and is very feeble and wretched."

"He is at my cabin and I fear his days are numbered, while he said he wished to tell me a secret."

"I wish you to see him and hear what he has to say before you send Keno after Mr. Marcey, for what he tells will be about this whole affair."

"I will be glad to see him and talk with him, sir."

"Very well, you come over to my camp this afternoon," and Hugh Holcomb took his leave.

He had hardly gone before Florence Dudley rode up, and dismounting called out:

"Mr. Nat, I wish to see you, for I have something to tell you."

Nat walked apart with her, and seeing that she was much excited said:

"I hope nothing has gone wrong with you, Miss Florence?"

"Yes, everything has gone wrong with me; but I did not come here to speak of myself, but of you."

"Your life is in danger, let me tell you."

"It always is."

"I am used to that, Miss Florence."

"Well, this time you will die if you do not look out, as the Mad Sport has said to me that you were threatening his life and he intended to kill you."

"I have never threatened him, but when he begins his game he will find that I have a pretty good hand to draw to."

"Why, Nat, you are getting to talk, just like the miners," said Florence with a smile; but her face clouded again and she said:

"You will not betray me if I tell you a secret?"

"No indeed."

"Well, I do not believe Rio Grande Don is the Mad Sport's friend, as he professes to be, and I think he is suspicious of him also."

"He seems anxious to go away, and so he has told me that I must go East with him within three days, and I feel confident that he intends to quarrel with Rio Grande Don before he goes, and of course that means to kill him."

"But you are surely not going with him?"

"I must, for he holds a secret against my father and threatens him unless I become his wife, but I know that it is my money he wants."

"To save my father I must marry him, and will."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD GUIDE'S STORY.

NAT heard what Florence Dudley said with a smile she did not understand, and then asked:

"Pardon me, but is your father's name Lewis Dudley?"

"It is."

"He is from New York?"

"Yes, but you will not tell?"

"Let me tell you that your father left New York the victim of a most designing villain, who, with circumstantial evidence to aid him, made him appear to be a murderer and a robber."

"But I am a detective, Miss Florence, and I know all about your father's case, and it was who ran down the real robber and

murderer, and time and again has your father been sought for and notices in the papers have urged his return."

"Thank God for those words."

"Maybrick Marcey knew him in New York, and was aware that he left at a time the crime was fastened upon him; but he knows he is not guilty, he is aware that your father dreads to be found out, innocent as he is, fearing to suffer for a crime he did not commit, and so he forces you, to save him, to become his wife."

"But I tell you that it will not go, for I will prove to your father that there is no charge against him, and he will return home in honor, and with the large wealth he has earned out here."

With tears in her eyes Florence grasped the hand of Nat who continued hastily:

"But not a word of this to any one until I say the word."

"Return home and pretend to accede to the demand of the Mad Sport and have your father do the same."

"I did not intend to strike so soon, but to save you I will, and let me tell you that my strongest ally in all this is Hugh Holcomb, and when the blow falls he will be the one to deal it."

"Now I can say no more, but go home and feel assured that you will not need the Man Killer, for he is about to the end of his rope, and you need not fear Rio Grande Don either, for his neck is in the same noose."

With a light heart, and hardly daring to believe what she had heard, Florence Dudley rode home, while Nat went at once to Hugh Holcomb's cabin.

The Indian chief was at once dispatched with a letter from Nat to Bonita the Gypsy Queen, and told to go with all the speed that his horse could carry him and guide her back to Golden Nugget.

Then Nat went into the cabin where Old Sloat the borderman lay.

"This is the young man, Pard Sloat, of whom I spoke."

"The one who came West at my call to thwart those who were plotting a crime, so you can tell him now what you would not tell me," said Hugh Holcomb.

"Yes, I'll tell you now, as he is here to act and keep your good heart from making a fool of you."

"You have told me of the boy and what he has done, and he'll see that things go right now."

"I'm on my last trail and nearing its end, so I must talk and you two must listen."

"I'm an old man, but time was when I was an army scout down in Texas, and I mind a splendid young fellow by the name of Malcolm Marcey."

"He married the sweetest girl I ever set eyes on, a Gypsy Queen, and they loved each other."

"There were two of them as different as starlight and sunlight; but he got the gem, for he won the girl with a heart and soul."

"Well, a son was born to them, and when he was still a baby the Gypsy camp was attacked by Indians and all were massacred, save two."

"The officer was away on a hunt at the time, with me, and we escaped; but his wife and child were killed."

"I did not tell you that I had married the Queen's sister, and that I had a little son too."

"But they were spared, though I believed them also slain."

"Long after I found that they were not, and when I found them she, my wife, tried to kill me."

"I never went near them again."

"But they are living, and the woman claiming to be Bonita the Gypsy Queen is but her sister, and the son, pretending to be Julian Marcey is known here as Rio Grande Don," said New York Na

"Who told you this, boy?"

"I went to their home and discovered the secret for myself, and that they are plotting now to get Mr. Marcey's fortune."

"It is true, but you will thwart them."

"I will; but do you know anything of Mr. Marcey's second marriage?"

"Yes; but it was to thwart her, Viola, my wife, and my wicked boy, that I told Hugh Holcomb what I did, though not all, and he wrote East to save Malcolm Marcey from them and you came West to take their trail."

"You are but a boy and a tenderfoot, but you have done your work."

"You ask if I know of Malcolm Marcey's second marriage?"

"Well, I do, and I know that his wife gave birth to twins."

"One of those boys was stolen as a baby by my wife, and he was reared with no knowledge of who he was."

"But I found out the crime, and it was only a short while ago that I discovered the missing boy, and there he is, bearing the name of the one who reared him, Hugh Holcomb, while his real name is Malcolm Marcey."

"My God! is this your secret, old man?"

"Is this true that you tell me?" cried the young miner.

"Boy, tell me who he is the image of?"

"Of the Mad Sport, Maybrick Marcey," said Nat, eagerly.

"It is true, for he is your twin brother, you all nobleness, he all evil; but so it goes."

"I have the proofs of what I tell you, so you can prove your claim, Malcolm Marcey, and may God bless you, for you have been true as a son to me."

"Now, young Tenderfoot Detective, you know it all, and there are two men and a woman you are to put your grip upon: Viola the Gypsy, her son Carlo, not Julian Marcey, and Maybrick Marcey, the Mad Man Killer."

"If you have the nerve to take them, do it now, so I can appear as a witness against them and place in your hands all proof of what I tell you."

"Will you take them, Tenderfoot?"

"I will!" was the stern response.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TENDERFOOT PLAYS TO WIN.

"You are covered, so hands up or die!"

The words fell like a death knell upon the ears of the Mad Sport and Rio Grande Don as the two sat in the former's cabin the night following the recital of the old guide's story to the New York Delegate.

The two men were talking earnestly together. They were plotting for the fortune, though each was even then trying to deceive the other.

The Man Killer, not willing to take any chances with a man so dangerous as Rio Grande Don, had that very day bribed two of his hirelings to kill him the next day, and yet he was telling him that he intended to marry Florence Dudley and wished him to go East with him.

He had been told, by Rio Grande Don, that the man sent to kill Julian Marcey had done his work, and believing it, the Mad Sport the more wished to remove the Don from his path.

And Rio Grande Rob, in reality Carlo, the son of Viola, the Gypsy, was planning to kill the Man Killer before he should wed Florence Dudley, and thus remove him from between him and their father's fortune!

But, the two were apparently devoted pards, and were talking together in the cabin of the Man Killer, when the ominous order—

"Hands up or die!" startled them like a rifle-shot.

They saw two Winchesters and a revolver covering them, when at once up went their hands, for they were not madmen enough to rush deliberately to their death.

Then, while the rifles still covered them,

the one holding the revolver glided up to one then to the other of the astounded men and slipped upon their wrists steel manacles, while he deftly disarmed them both.

"That Boy Tenderfoot!" gasped the Mad Man Killer, recognizing New York Nat as the young Gold Hunter.

"Yes, gentlemen, I am the Kid Tenderfoot Detective in the Wild West. I want you two for conspiracy to kill, to rob, and for other heinous crimes."

"Pard Ferrets, come in and we'll make them doubly secure."

In came Keno and Freckles, when the two infuriated men were securely ironed and then bound together with lariats.

They soon, however, became white-faced and silent, both wondering how much was known against them.

Presently into the cabin came Hugh Holcomb.

At sight of him the Mad Sport cried:

"You have done this because I won Florence Dudley from you, and this is your dastardly revenge!"

"No, this young tenderfoot from New York has run you to earth, though I confess that, to save Florence Dudley from you, when I learned from one who knows you both, who and what you are, I did plot to checkmate you, Maybrick Marcey—you whom I am ashamed to own as my twin brother, and whom no word or act of mine can now save."

"Now I also know of you, Carlo, son of the Gypsy Viola, and how you plotted, not knowing that I lived, to get rid of Maybrick, here, put my old father out of the way, and thus secure his fortune."

"I knew you both as you are, but for the sake of our kindred blood, Maybrick, I would have saved you if I could."

"But your father, Carlo, Old Sloat, the guide, has made known the story, and if the miners do not hang you both—My God! they are coming!"

A roar of many voices, the tramp of many feet was heard, and New York Nat cried:

"They must not, they shall not hang them."

"We will protect them and take them to trial."

"Nat, you are not in New York now, so beware! These men would tear you and your comrades limb from limb, if you presumed to interfere."

"They are all around, and thirst for the blood of those two men, for Old Sloat, when he heard you were to arrest them to-night, went to the tavern and made known the whole story."

"If you value your lives do not resist the decree of fate. It is Wild West law—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!"

New York Nat could but yield, and a moment later the cabin was surrounded by hundreds of enraged miners.

Nat made a brave appeal for them to let the law punish the villains, but he was silenced with the words:

"Border law and Wild West justice rule in Golden Nugget!"

"They must hang!"

And, pleading for mercy in vain, the two men were dragged up to the tavern and swung up into mid-air. A just retribution had fallen upon them for their crimes; they had merited and met the outlaw's doom.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

GOLD NUGGET CAMPS were wild with excitement the night of the hanging of the Mad Man Killer and Rio Grande Don.

Nat and his two young comrades had accompanied Hugh Holcomb to the home of Miner Dudley, and there they found Old Sloat, who had told to Florence, and to her father, also, the story of the crimes known to the reader.

Then Nat made known that retribution had befallen them, also told Mr. Dudley the story of how his foe had been run to earth, confessed his crimes against him and no stain longer rested upon his name.

"I thank God for what you tell me, my noble young friend, and within the next two weeks I will settle up my affairs here and go East with my child," said the miner, fervently, and he added:

"Yes, and you will have a large fortune, Florence—one that I place in the hands of Hugh Holcomb—no, I beg pardon, of Malcolm Marcey to manage for you, for he, too, must leave these mines."

It was also arranged that New York Nat and his two comrades should go along, but the Tenderfoot Detective decided that he would go upon the trail, meet the Gypsy woman coming with the Indian as her guide, and turn her back to return to her home, for he said:

"These mad miners might kill her, too, and I do not war on women."

"She can go back to her ranch, for her punishment will be great in the ignominious death of her idolized son, and the loss of the fortune she had plotted to gain."

So Nat and his two fellow Ferrets went on the trail, and meeting the Ute and the Gypsy two days later, the woman heard the story of her schemes being discovered and of the death of her desperado son.

Loving him as she did, she loved her own safety more, and gladly took Nat's advice and fled back to her ranch home to pass her days in bitter memories.

When the Ferrets returned to Golden Nugget, they learned that Old Sloat was dead and had been buried with honors.

Miner Dudley, Florence and Malcolm Marcey were ready to depart, and they rode out of Golden Nugget amid the wildest cheering of the miners.

When they reached the railroad, they all decided to release Millionaire Marcey from his confinement, and this they did, the old man being overwhelmed with joy at having found a noble son in the young miner, and putting from him all grief at the fate of the unworthy Maybrick.

Back to New York he went with the party.

Upon arrival in the great city, New York Nat and his comrades again retired into the seclusion of their lives as the Unknown Ferrets of the Metropolis, but with their treasury much the richer for their work accomplished as Tenderfoot Detectives in the Wild West.

THE END.

—
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- 553 Lafitte's Confession; or, The Creole Corsair.
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- 507 The Royal Middy's Luck; or, The Hunted Midshipman.
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